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ABSTRACT

A descriptive exploratory study examined what impact community leadership development programs in Ohio had on leadership program participants' leadership skills. Data were gathered using multiple methods: face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, and pre- and postassessments of leadership practices. The self-report questionnaire used was the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes and Posner 1987). Respondents were a census of the 67 program participants, a purposeful sample of 36 alumni, and a census of the 7 program directors. Significant differences in responses on the pre- and postassessments indicated that the community leadership program participants increased their leadership skills in the following areas: challenging the process, inspiring a vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart. Alumni indicated the following: they were more willing to challenge the status quo and take risks; they had broadened and changed their perspective of leadership roles/responsibilities within the community and were encouraging others to accept some leadership responsibility; and they had developed a greater appreciation for teamwork and collaboration. Benefits reported by alumni were as follows: increased networking within the community, greater understanding and ability to interact with people, increased self-confidence, and understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of their leadership responsibility as a citizen. (Appendixes contain a list of 16 references and instruments; specifically, Program Director interview questions, alumni focus group questions, and variables identified for focus group and face-to-face interviews.) (YLB)

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ED 388 808

Developing Community Leaders:

An Impact Assessment of Ohio's Community Leadership Programs

Ohio State University Extension
1993-1995

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Introduction

Leadership is not an innate characteristic. Leadership can be developed and enhanced through formal and informal training projects (Bolton, 1991). Many community leadership programs throughout the United States are based upon this premise. Several studies, sponsored by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, showed that leadership programs make a difference in the lives of participants. A study conducted by Howell, Weir, and Cook (1979) showed that four Kellogg leadership programs implemented in California, Michigan, Montana, and Pennsylvania between 1965 and 1976 increased involvement of program participants in public and private organizations. Participants increased their leadership and problem-solving skills with confidence and broader understanding of society. The programs enhanced participants' feelings of independence, growth, self-worth, knowledge of resources, the importance of fact gathering, greater awareness of community problems, and the ability to use group skills in community life. The study also revealed that educational institutions involved in the programs expanded their programming in public affairs' education and leadership development.

Many community groups in Ohio, such as Chambers of Commerce, United Way, city and county governments, Kiwanas, Rotary, and others are interested in developing community leadership skills as a way to improve their community's ability to address public issues and concerns. The National Extension Task Force on Community Leadership (1986) provided the following definition of community leadership.

> Community leadership is that which involves influence, power, and input into public decision-making over one or more spheres of activity. The spheres of activity may

include an organization, an area of interest, an institution, a town, county or a region. Leadership capacity extends beyond the skills necessary to maintain a social service and/or activities organization. The leadership skills include those necessary for public decision-making, policy development, program implementation, and organizational maintenance (p. 7).

Ohio State University Extension in conjunction with Project EXCEL (Excellence in Community Elected and Appointed Leadership) assists Ohio counties in developing community leadership programs and teaching leadership skills. Through Project EXCEL's teaching, counties develop skills in areas such as situational leadership, conflict management, celebrating diversity through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, values and ethics in leadership and management, visioning, boardsmanship, grantsmanship, derailment, transition management, recruiting and empowering volunteers, motivation, Challenge by Choice high ropes course exercise, low initiatives, and several other topics.

Community leadership development programs in Ohio have been in existence for several years with more being added each year. However, the impact of such programs is undocumented. What impact are these programs having upon the participants? What impact are these programs having upon the community?

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn what impact community leadership development programs have on leadership program participants' leadership skills. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Describe the community leadership programs collaborating with Project EXCEL in each county.
2. Describe the participants in the community leadership programs collaborating with Project EXCEL.
3. Assess the impact of each of these community leadership programs in terms of the leadership skills acquired by the program participants.

Limitations of the Study

Recognized limitations of the study included:

1. Generalization of the findings is restricted to the purposeful sample of leadership program participants.
2. The responses of the participants may have represented perceptions that may have been influenced by other variables not addressed in this study.
3. Each community leadership program had unique differences in the curriculum that may have affected the participants' responses on the quantitative questionnaire and during the focus group interviews.

Review of Literature

Description of Programs

Many community leadership programs exist across the United States. While each was geared specifically to a community or region, these programs also had some common traits.

The Kellogg Colorado Rural Revitalization Project (CRRP) had three general goals for small community well-being. "These included: (1) increasing broad-based citizen initiative with local problem solving and improvement efforts; (2) improving citizen's understanding, organization and effectiveness with accomplishing the tasks they set; and (3) increasing the interest, capacity, and coordination in state service institutions to better support such citizen efforts" (Kincaid & Knop, 1992, p. 1). The program was guided by the Colorado Division of Local Affairs, the University of Colorado, and Colorado State University, including links with Colorado Cooperative Extension. Initiated in 1988, the CRRP worked with communities of less than 5,000 populations; 47 rural communities participated in this project. Funding for the project was received from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Upon selection, "communities received orientation and leadership training and technical assistance as they formed revitalization 'action teams' and planned and implemented specific economical, social, and/or cultural improvement projects" (Kincaid & Knop, 1992, p. 8).

According to Langone and Rohs (1992, p. 2), "In response to this critical need for leadership development, the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service initiated its Community Leadership: A County Perspective program in 1986." The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, with cosponsors from local chambers of commerce, boards of commissioners,

and other groups with community development interests, developed and implemented the program, designed to equip local leaders with skills to manage change in their towns and cities. State Extension specialists were instructors and county Extension agents were local program coordinators. The 12-week program consisted of three units involving 30 instructional hours. The program objectives were to develop basic leadership skills, identify major issues and concerns that affect a county, understand local government functions, improve the quality of life in the county, and help build a solid community leadership base for the county. The participants for each county were selected by an advisory committee and each class was kept to approximately 35 participants, typically representing government personnel from all levels, educators, civic leaders, medical and health personnel, public officials, public safety officials, and utility company officials (Langone & Rohs, 1992).

In Michigan, a study was completed on five Expanding Horizons Community Leadership Development Programs. The Expanding Horizons programs were an Extension offering targeted for a cross-section of new and less experienced community leaders (Kimball, Andrews, and Quiroz, 1987). Most of the programs were held as weekly or monthly evening meetings, over a three to a six-month time span. The five programs evaluated were conducted during 1984 and although individualized, each had several common objectives: "awareness of leadership styles and ways to improve organizational functioning, understanding the dynamics of groups and processes of group action, improving self confidence and commitments to participate in community affairs, and improved understanding of the community" (Kimball, Andrews, & Quiroz, 1987, p. 1).

The University of Akron conducted the University/Community Team Leadership Program, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The goals of the program were "to develop University and community relationships through which leadership in the many constituencies can be identified; leadership participation in the University/community activities can be encouraged; and cooperative ventures can be increased and to provide participants with the opportunity to develop team leadership skills" (Seeley, 1981, p. 1). Four classes of 30 participants each were conducted in late 1979 and 1980. Each class lasted for six weeks, consisting of an initial two-day workshop and five weekly sessions. "Content ranged from communication skills to leadership styles, conflict management, and organizational/community diagnosis" (Seeley, 1981, p. 1).

In Montana, another leadership training program was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 1971. "The purpose of this program was: '...to increase the social and economic knowledge and leadership skills of present and future leaders in Montana...' " (Montana Cooperative Extension Service, 1971, p. 1 cited in Williams, 1981, p. 64). Training groups had approximately 30 participants, selected from throughout the state by a project advisory committee. The training programs ranged in intensity from a one week workshop to a study-travel program, lasting about four weeks per year for a three-year period (Williams, 1981). Four variations of the program were evaluated.

Personal Benefits

Rohs and Langone (1993) reported that Georgia's Community Leadership: A County Perspective (CLCP) program influenced leadership and problem solving skill level. They found

"those who participated in the community leadership program felt more confident about promoting causes, were better able to motivate people, make informed decisions on public issues, work with people, lead a group, and deal with local leaders than those in the control group" (p. 112). Additionally, "several program participants reported that they had taken on group leadership roles for the first time" (Rohs & Langone, 1993, p. 113). However, they also reported program participants felt less able to influence community affairs than the control group.

According to Langone and Rohs (1992), "one important success of this leadership development effort is the strong bond formed among each county's program graduates and their continued activity after formal classes have ended" (p. 12). They reported that "the CLCP classes made people 'feel responsible for what goes on' thereby acting as a catalyst for goal setting and action" (Langone & Rohs, 1992, p. 15). They also found the classes represented a broader range of community members and participants indicated their motivation to become involved in local and state affairs. The leadership program helped participants view their community from a different perspective and participants exhibited changes in perception of improvements needed in community service areas (Langone & Rohs, 1992).

A 20-year evaluation of the California Agricultural Leadership Program indicated that the primary benefits received by the program were "increased personal contacts and interaction with classmates, increased leadership skills, travel experience, interaction with government and agricultural leaders and increased awareness and understanding of other societies and cultures" (Whent & Leising, 1992, p. 38). Based on study findings, Whent and Leising (1992) concluded the program positively affected participants' personal, career, and leadership development;

improved participants' family and peer relationships; and reached program objectives of leadership development, broadened perspectives, increased understanding of other societies, and helped participants better represent agriculture issues to urban groups.

The evaluation committee of Seattle, Washington's Leadership Tomorrow (LT) program found several personal benefits from their program. "The most direct impacts of the LT program are on the participants, rather than the community. Networking and exposure to issues and individuals were the most frequently mentioned personal impacts" (Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991, p. 33). The program was also successful "in exposing participants to diverse viewpoints, in teaching tolerance of a broad range of perspectives, and in educating them on regional issues" (Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991, p. 5). The evaluation found the program was less effective in teaching leadership skills and that many participants rated themselves high in this area prior to the program. Additionally, 73% of the respondents were asked to serve on boards after the program and 44% reported an increase in their volunteer activity.

Participants of Michigan's Expanding Horizons Leadership Development programs "rated the programs as helping them gain knowledge of their communities and to understand personal leadership styles and organizational effectiveness. The programs were rated as less helpful in assisting citizens develop their skills and abilities to participate in organizational change and public affairs processes" (Kimball et al., 1987, p. 3). Seventy-four percent of the respondents reported feeling "quite a bit" more capable of contributing to group actions. The majority of the respondents anticipated becoming more active in the organizations in which they

were already involved. They also became more committed to becoming informed about public issues, helped groups become more effective, provided organizational leadership, and participated in changing policies (Kimball, et al., 1987).

Respondents in the follow-up study showed changes in their leadership behavior after completing the program. Kimball et al. (1987) found that

> Respondents averaged involvement in 2.6 organizations prior to participation and 2.8 organizations 18 months after participation....Participants became involved in significantly more government and community service oriented organizations between the period of participation and 18 months later.... Because of these shifts in organizational participation, respondents became involved in organizations more likely to impact community decision making (p. 9).

An increase in leadership roles was not shown by respondents, but their self-assessed leadership effectiveness increased over time.

A case study of a leadership program in Kalamazoo, Michigan provided further evidence of impact. One program participant "said of his experience in training, 'It gave me a sense of the meaning of consensus...I've since learned to respect others' thoughts and to get others to enter into the discussion' " (Grimshaw, 1982, p. 5). The participant commented the board members in their community association had learned to be better listeners and participation from both the neighborhood and board members increased. Another program participant commented on feeling more free to discuss things in a group and in giving her ideas. The training brought a change in leadership role for one participant. She had lived in the neighborhood, but had not

participated due in part to lack of self-confidence. As president of the association, she said " 'I wouldn't be serving as president if I hadn't had the training' " (Grimshaw, 1982, p. 9).

In a University of Akron study, Seeley (1981) reported "participants believed their leadership skills and knowledge increased because of participation in the program. Further, participants applied their learnings in their professional, civic, personal, and family lives" (p. 3). Participants believed they were more effective leaders and applied information learned in important situations. Impact in three areas was discovered: the personal development of participants, facilitation of better communication, and the University's commitment to its urban environment (Seeley, 1981).

In Williams' (1981) study of four different types of leadership training in Montana, she found all four program groups gained public speaking confidence and reduced feelings of self-consciousness. Also, "all respondent groups felt the training had positive impacts on their interest in public affairs, their feelings of self-worth and confidence, their advancement in public affairs activities, their leadership abilities, and their knowledge and skills" (p. 78). Participants in the more intense training programs had greater changes on these variables and additionally had greater confidence in their leadership images and more active involvement as leaders in local community affairs. Williams also found that participants increased their extra-local communications and leadership activities and became cognizant of the impact decision making had on their communities. Most program participants redirected leadership activities to organizations that had influence on community development (Williams, 1981).

Community Benefits

Kincaid and Knopp (1992) found, in a study of the Colorado Rural Revitalization Project (CRRP) found that the most important local benefits were "specific local projects and events planned, initiated and/or completed...cooperation, working together and organizing for action...increased citizen awareness, participation, commitment and increased community pride...[and] building a base/foundation for project planning and execution" (pp. 22-23). Most respondents stated CRRP increased discussions about the community's future, increased local coordination on civic projects, and contributed toward better understanding of community challenges and opportunities. Additionally, CRRP activities helped build local agreement on community goals and ways to achieve them (Kincaid and Knop, 1992).

Langone and Rohs (1992), in the Georgia community leadership program study, found "as a result of working together in the Community Leadership classes, networking across many groups occurred" (p. 12). Also, a unified spirit developed among community leaders and individuals and organizations discovered the importance of working together. On going alumni groups formed to address county issues in almost half the counties participating in the program, with most having elected officers and by laws. Many counties also reported a reactivation of some non-functioning community organizations.

Organizational Benefits

Two studies reported benefits to the organization as a result of community leadership programs. Kincaid and Knop (1992) reported the site manager's experience contributed to their professional growth, understanding of local volunteerism, citizen initiative, and how these can be

mobilized. The Cooperative Extension Service in Georgia experienced an increase in visibility, new sources of support, and the staff were called on for leadership positions in a variety of organizations (Langone and Rohs, 1992).

Program Improvements and Recommendations

Because of CRRP's grassroots, self-help emphasis, certain communities needed more direct attention. Follow-through needed to be improved and project time increased beyond the one year of direct community assistance (Kincaid and Knop, 1992). Team projects were rated as too time consuming with few tangible results in Washington's Leadership Tomorrow (Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991), yet California's Agricultural Leadership Program recommended greater active participation of class members in all segments of the program (Whent and Leising, 1992). In comparing four types of community leadership programs, Williams (1981) found "the study-travel programs were more effective than the training programs without the travel component" (p. 79) and suggested that effective leadership training programs include both classroom study and on-site practice. Williams also reported that the single week training program was inferior to the more intensive programs and suggested a single week program could be used to screen participants for later participation in more intensive programs.

One study recommended increasing the number of women and minorities (Whent and Leising, 1992). The Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee found a concern over the mission and target audience. Some community leaders and alumni thought the program should be directed toward the senior level of corporate and public leaders to obtain effective community

change. Others believed more representation was needed from minority leaders, labor leaders, and leaders from more diverse businesses. Respondents of the Leadership Tomorrow evaluation also recommended specific training in managing conflict, fund raising, managing diversity, understanding the political process, motivation of volunteers, and effective public speaking (Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991).

Summary

Similarities were found among the findings from evaluation studies of various community leadership programs, although programs differed in format and length and were geared specifically to a particular community. Three programs reported the number of participants in each class. Two of these kept class size at 30 (Seeley, 1981; Williams, 1981), and the other had approximately 35 participants (Langone and Rohs, 1992). The length of programs ranged from one week to more than a year (Williams, 1981). Most programs were between three months and one year in length.

The most cited benefit of community leadership programming was increased citizen involvement/volunteer activity (Kincaid and Knop, 1992; Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991; Kimball et al., 1987; Grimshaw, 1982; Williams, 1981). Other frequently reported benefits were increased leadership skills (Rohs and Langone, 1993; Whent and Leising, 1992; Seeley, 1981; Williams, 1981), increased confidence (Rohs and Langone, 1993; Kimball et al., 1987; Williams, 1981), increased networking among participants and/or community groups (Langone and Rohs, 1992; Kincaid and Knop, 1992; Whent and Leising, 1992; Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991), a broadened or different perspective (Langone and

Rohs, 1992; Whent and Leising, 1992; Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991), and education on community issues (Rohs and Langone, 1993; Whent and Leising, 1992; Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991; Kimball et al., 1987).

Although four studies reported increased leadership skills, two reported no significant increase in these skills (Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee, 1991 and Kimball et al., 1987). Taking on a new leadership role was reported by two studies (Rohs and Langone, 1993 and Grimshaw, 1982), yet another found no change in leadership roles (Kimball et al., 1987). Also reported were increased listening/communication skills (Grimshaw, 1982 and Seeley, 1981) and a shift in community organization activity to those organizations that have more impact on the community (Kimball et al., 1987 and Williams, 1981).

Methodology

Research Design

This descriptive exploratory study was initiated in January 1993 and designed to assess the impact of community leadership programs on community leadership program participants in Ohio. Data were gathered utilizing multiple methods of face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, and pre- and post assessments of leadership practices.

Population and Sample

The participants for this study consisted of a census of the 67 program participants, a purposeful sample of 36 alumni and a census of the seven program directors. These programs must have been supported by OSU Extension and Project EXCEL in the planning or teaching of

at least 50% of their leadership programs during the 1992-93 program year. Counties fitting this condition included Auglaize, Clinton, Fayette, Hardin, Licking, Paulding and Williams (Appendix A).

The typical Ohio community leadership program was conducted from seven to 12 months for either one-half day or one full day per month covering a variety of leadership topics such as creating a vision, social styles impact [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator], effective leadership, building better teams, conflict management, recruiting and empowering volunteers, situational leadership, marketing, and strategic planning. However, one county was an ongoing program with the same participants attending only as they seen a need for the topic being addressed. In addition, many programs included visiting sites within and around the community to increase their knowledge about the educational system, the criminal justice system, business and economic development within the county, health and human services, the governmental system within the county, and the agricultural perspective.

Most of the programs did not use any type of process to make the final selection of their participants; however, most programs required individuals to complete an application. The applications included questions on employment, education, organizational activities and involvement, identification of pressing issues within the county, and what the participant hoped to gain through participation in the leadership program. All programs included in this study were less than eight years old with most programs allowing all applicants to participate. Class sizes ranged from 10 to 40 participants. Typical participants included: telephone company personnel, Farm Credit Services personnel, human resources and personnel department employees from

local industries, managers of utility companies, health care professionals, small business owners, elected officials (mayors and county commissioners), farmers, banking personnel, school board officials, township trustees, and county government employees.

All leadership programs were funded by participant tuition fees ranging from $100 to $500 per participant; however, the ongoing program did not charge a tuition fee but was funded by the county commission. Fund raisers were also conducted by the program directors and alumni of the respective programs for additional programming monies.

Instrumentation

A self-report questionnaire, focus group interviews, and face-to-face interviews were used to measure the variables of interest in this study. The questionnaire utilized was the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI): A Self-Assessment and Analysis. This instrument was developed by Kouzes and Posner (1987) to empirically measure the leadership actions and behaviors of Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. Kouzes and Posner (1993) define these leadership practices as:

> *Challenge the Process*: searching out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate, and improve; and experimenting, taking risks, and learning from the accompanying mistakes.
>
> *Inspiring a Shared Vision*: envisioning an uplifting and ennobling future; and enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams.

Enabling Others to Act: fostering collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust; and strengthening people by sharing information and power and increasing their discretion and visibility.

Modeling the Way: setting an example for others by behaving in ways that are consistent with their stated values; and planning small "wins" that promote consistent progress and build commitment.

Encouraging the Heart: recognizing individual contributions to the success of every project; and celebrating team accomplishments regularly. (pp. 4-7)

Six statements were used to measure each of these concepts or practices using a five-point Likert scale. Each statement was ranked from Rarely or Very Seldom to Very Frequently or Almost Always with a higher value representing greater use of the leadership practice. To determine the participant's leadership practices, the values of the items marked for each scale were totalled. Using the participants' total scores, group mean scores were calculated for each leadership practice.

Additional items to measure selected demographic characteristics of each participant were added to the LPI questionnaire. These items included: communication with a public official; hours of leadership training within the last year; years lived in the community; place of residence; employment status; occupation title; place of employment; type of work; education level; income; race/ethnic background; age; gender; and organizational involvement that included hours involved per month, officer status, and committee member status.

The validity of the instrument was confirmed by a panel of experts, including a county Extension agent, community leadership program directors, an Associate Professor in Agricultural Education, and an Extension Associate, Leadership Development. Reliability tests were published by the authors, Posner and Kouzes (1992), for the LPI. Internal reliabilities ranged from .70 to .91 (coefficient alphas) for the five leadership practices. Test-retest reliabilities were .93 and above. Social desirability bias tests were not statistically significant. The reliability of the instrument for the participants and the comparison group in this study was determined by computing Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients that ranged from .57 to .80 for the five leadership practices.

The focus group interview was used to uncover information about participants' perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts (Krueger, 1988). A series of several questions was developed by the investigators to guide the face-to-face interviews with the program directors (Appendix B) and the focus group interviews with alumni (Appendix C) of the community leadership programs. The investigators noted reactions and impressions to the semi-structured, open-ended questions.

Data Collection

Four of the program directors administered pre- and post assessments at the first and final class of their 1993-94 program year to participants and to a comparison group. The three additional programs were not included due to one program being an ongoing program with the same participants; one program did not start another class during the year; and the third program changed the starting month of their program year and could not be included in this study's

timeline. The comparison group was selected by each of the program directors and consisted of individuals most like the participants but who had not submitted an application to participate in the respective community leadership programs. An alpha level of .05 was established a priori as the level of significance.

The questionnaire used was the LPI with additional items to measure involvement in organizations/activities and demographic data. The response rate was 85.1% for the program participants (57 participants completed the program, five participants did not complete their program and five participants had incomplete data).

In depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with the seven program directors by OSU Extension personnel. The main purpose of the interviews was to gather overall impressions about their respective leadership programs. Interviews were tape recorded and lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Verbatim transcripts were made from the audio tapes.

Focus group interviews were conducted with six of the 1992-93 community leadership program alumni groups. One program was in its first year of operation and did not have an alumni group. The main purpose of the focus group interviews was to gather overall impressions about their respective leadership programs. Interviews were tape recorded and lasted 45 minutes to one hour. Verbatim transcripts were made from the audio tapes.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the Leadership Practices Inventory were analyzed with SPSS for Windows 6.0. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard

deviations were used to summarize and organize the data. The t-Test and Analysis of Covariance were used to determine if significant differences occurred between groups.

The program directors' transcripts were analyzed by the principal investigators using Ethnograph, a qualitative software computer program. Four general areas were identified from the content of the interviews: (a) how the programming contributed to the change in leadership skills of program participants (personal benefits); (b) how the programming contributed to the change in leadership skills within the community (community benefits); (c) OSU Extension's and Project EXCEL's roles during the program year (benefits attributed to OSU Extension/Project EXCEL); and (d) the major strengths and areas needing improvement of the community leadership program (program improvement). Under each of the four general areas, the investigators identified key concepts to guide the data analysis process (See Appendix D).

The alumni focus group interview transcripts were analyzed by the principal investigators using Ethnograph, a qualitative software computer program. Four general areas were identified from the content of the interviews: (a) how the programming contributed to a change in their professional or family life; how their view of leadership changed; and how they plan to use the newly learned skills (personal benefits); (b) how the programming contributed to a change in their view of the community (community benefits); (c) OSU Extension's and Project EXCEL's roles during the program year (benefits attributed to Extension/Project EXCEL); and (d) the major strengths and areas needing improvement in the community leadership program (program improvement). Under each of the four general areas, the investigators identified key concepts to guide the data analysis process (See Appendix D).

Findings/Results

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of community leadership programs on participants in Ohio. Presented in this section are a description of the participants, measures of central tendency and variability, hypothesis testing, and focus group and face-to-face interview findings.

Description of Participants

Table 1 illustrates frequency distributions of program participants on selected demographic characteristics. As shown in this table, three-fourths of the program participants reported holding either professional or managerial positions. Most of the program participants (98%) had full-time employment status. Nearly two-thirds of the program participants had at least a college degree. Eighty-seven percent of participants had a gross family income of $30,000 or higher per year.

Table 2 shows the majority (97%) of program participants were White, while the remaining 3% was American Native or Alaskan Native. Approximately 85% of program participants resided in places between rural areas and small cities; on the other hand, 5% lived in metropolitan areas and 11% on farms. More than one-third of the participants were female. Two-thirds of the program participants responded affirmatively when asked if they had communicated with a public official during the last year.

Table 1: Demographics for Occupation, Employment Status, Education Level and Income

Variable	f	%
Occupation (n=57)		
Professional, Technical	9	15.8
Manager, Official, Proprietor	35	61.4
Clerical	4	7.0
Sales, Other Service	2	3.6
Farm, Farm Manager	1	1.8
Other	6	10.5
Employment Status (n=57)		
Full-time	56	98.2
Part-time	1	1.8
Highest Level of Education (n=57)		
High School Graduate	7	12.3
Trade School	2	3.5
Some College	11	19.3
College Graduate	21	36.8
Some Graduate Work	10	17.5
Graduate Degree	6	10.5
Gross Family Income (n=54)		
$10,000 - $19,999	1	1.9
$20,000 - $29,999	6	11.1
$30,000 - $39,999	14	25.9
$40,000 - $49,999	9	16.7
$50,000 - $59,999	12	22.2
$60,000 or more	12	22.2

Table 2: Characteristics for Race/Ethnic Background, Residence, Gender, and Communication with a Public Official (n=57)

Variable	f	%
Race/Ethnic Background		
American Native or Alaskan Native	2	3.5
White, not of Hispanic Origin	55	96.5
Residence		
Farm or Ranch	6	10.5
Rural, but not a farm	14	24.6
Small Town (less than 2,500)	5	8.8
Town (2,500 to 10,000)	10	17.5
Small City (10,000 to 50,000)	19	33.3
Metropolis (more than 100,000)	3	5.3
Gender		
Female	22	38.6
Male	35	61.4
Communicated with Public Official Last Year		
No	19	33.3
Yes	38	66.7

Table 3 reports the number of contacts with public officials, hours of leadership training last year, years lived in the community, and age for each participant in the leadership training program. The participants had the highest mean number of contacts (7.64) with local public officials. The second highest mean number of contacts was with national officials (3.18). The lowest mean number of contacts was made with state officials (1.75). Approximately one-half (25) of the participants had contacted local public officials, whereas about one-fifth of the

participants had contacted state officials (12) or national officials (11). The participants also reported they had received about 16 hours of leadership training during the last year and lived an average of just more than 21 years in the community. The participants averaged about 38 years in age.

Table 3: Contacts with Public Officials, Leadership Training, Years in Community, and Age

Variable	n	Mean	sd.	Range
No. of Contacts with Public Officials				
Local Officials	25	7.64	15.98	1 - 80
State Officials	12	1.75	1.60	0 - 6
National Officials	11	3.18	3.55	0 - 10
Hrs of Leadership Training Last Year	57	16.02	33.92	0 - 200
Years Lived in Community	57	21.09	15.90	>1 - 55
Age	57	38.47	8.31	25 - 60

Table 4 displays pre- and post test mean scores for the Leadership Practices Inventory. T-tests for dependent groups were employed to test the null hypotheses. As displayed in this table, program participants significantly increased ($p < .01$) their leadership skills in each area of the Leadership Practices Inventory. In other words, program participants received higher mean scores on the post test for the variables Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way and Encouraging the Heart.

Table 4: Paired t-Tests for Leadership Practices Inventory (n=57)

Variable	Mean	sd.	p
Challenging the Process			
Pre-Test.	3.48	.59	<.01*
Post Test	3.80	.53	
Inspiring a Shared Vision			
Pre-Test	3.16	.68	<.01*
Post Test	3.51	.59	
Enabling Others to Act			
Pre-Test	3.84	.44	<.01*
Post Test	4.15	.41	
Modeling the Way			
Pre-Test	3.40	.49	<.01*
Post Test	3.80	.46	
Encouraging the Heart			
Pre-Test	3.74	.69	<.01*
Post Test	3.99	.65	

T-tests were used to test for differences between the participants and the comparison group on each of the pretest leadership practices. Table 5 indicates that for the leadership practices of Modeling the Way, the comparison group self-scored themselves statistically significantly higher (3.81) on the pretest than did the participants (3.40). However, no statistically significant differences were detected for the other four leadership practices.

Table 5: Independent t-Tests for Leadership Practices Inventory Pre-Test

Variable	Mean	sd.	p
Challenging the Process			
Participants (n=57)	3.48	.59	0.83
Comparison Group (n=9)	3.54	.75	
Inspiring a Shared Vision			
Participants (n=57)	3.16	.68	.30
Comparison Group (n=9)	3.44	.72	
Enabling Others to Act			
Participants (n=57)	3.84	.44	.34
Comparison Group (n=9)	4.00	.44	
Modeling the Way			
Participants (n=57)	3.40	.49	<.01*
Comparison Group (n=9)	3.81	.29	
Encouraging the Heart			
Participants (n=57)	3.74	.69	.58
Comparison Group (n=9)	3.83	.43	

As was previously reported in Table 5, the participants' mean pretest score (3.40) for Modeling the Way was significantly lower than that of the comparison group (3.81). Therefore, analysis of covariance was used to control for this difference (Table 6). The pretest score was used as the covariate to compute the adjusted mean score, which provides a better estimate of the effect of the leadership training on Modeling the Way than that of the unadjusted mean. The participants' adjusted mean score (3.89) was higher than that of the comparison group (3.86).

However, the difference between the adjusted post test mean scores for the two groups was not significant (p=.87).

Table 6: Analysis of Covariance for Modeling the Way

			Post Test	
Group	n	Pretest	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Participants	57	3.40	3.80	3.89
Comparison Group	9	3.81	3.94	3.86

Source	ss	DF	MS	F	p
Covariate (Pretest)	2.45	1	2.45	13.42	<.01
Groups	.01	1	.01	.03	.87
Residual (error)	11.51	63	.18		
Total	13.97	65			

T-tests were used to test for difference between the participants and the comparison group on each of the post test leadership practices. Table 7 indicates that no statistically significant differences were found for Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act or Encouraging the Heart.

Table 7: Independent t-Tests for Leadership Practices Inventory Post Test

Variable	Mean	sd.	p
Challenging the Process			
Participants (n=57)	3.80	.53	.74
Comparison Group (n=9)	3.74	.46	
Inspiring a Shared Vision			
Participants (n=57)	3.51	.59	.95
Comparison Group (n=9)	3.50	.53	
Enabling Others to Act			
Participants (n=57)	4.15	.41	.72
Comparison Group (n=9)	4.09	.45	
Encouraging the Heart			
Participants (n=57)	3.99	.65	.52
Comparison Group (n=9)	3.85	.57	

The community leadership program participants' involvement with organizations/activities at the beginning of the program (pretest) and again at the end of the program (post test) is reported in Table 8. A t-Test was computed to determine if there were differences between the values reported for the number of organizations to which they belonged, hours of involvement per month, number of offices held, and number of committees on which they served. This analysis found that while the participants were in the training program there was a significant increase in the number of organizations to which they belonged (.64) and the hours of involvement they had per month (7.78). The number of offices held and number of

committees on which they served did not differ significantly from the time the training began until it ended. It should be noted that the participants' involvement increased in each of the four areas studied.

Table 8: t-Tests for Organizations/Activities Involvement (n=57)

Variable	Mean	sd.	Range	p
No. of Organizations				
Pre-Test	2.68	2.01	0 - 9	<.01*
Post Test	3.32	1.83	0 - 9	
Hours per Month				
Pre-Test	12.04	13.38	0 - 72	.01*
Post Test	19.82	27.66	0 - 143	
No. Offices Held				
Pre-Test	0.75	0.95	0 - 4	.53
Post Test	0.82	0.98	0 - 4	
No. of Committees				
Pre-Test	1.44	1.6	0 - 5	.21
Post Test	1.67	1.46	0 - 6	

Program Directors' Perspectives

Face-to-face interviews were held with the community leadership program directors. Presented in this section are the directors' perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts on the

personal benefits to program participants, benefits to the community, benefits attributed to OSU Extension and Project EXCEL and improvements needed in the leadership programs.

Personal Benefits

Teamwork was mentioned by two of the directors as one of the positive outcomes of the leadership programs. People in the community were working together a "lot better," particularly in highly stressful work environments. In addition, morale, team spirit, and communication among co-workers improved tremendously as a result of participating in the leadership program. Two directors indicated that the leadership program was "a great forum" for participants to meet and get to know other professional colleagues in the community. One director stated that she saw more networking after people participated in the leadership program.

Community awareness was a personal benefit highlighted by four of the directors. Some examples of participants' comments, as stated by program directors, related to community awareness included: (a) "being a part of...county's first community leadership program opened my eyes to critical issues; brought me to a better understanding of values and relationships that impact growth and betterment; and helped prepare me to be a positive contributor to our community progress"; (b) "overwhelmingly, I think ... they [participants] got a different perspective on the community"; and (c) "they [participants] have become more cognizant of community issues." One director shared a story of a participant who was very apprehensive about participating in class discussion to the degree that he was ready to drop out of the program; however, his self-confidence improved throughout the leadership program to a level that he challenged some presenters with his questions.

Three directors indicated that as a result of studying the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the situational leadership theory, program participants were able to understand and interact with other people much better. Some examples of the participants comments, as stated by the program directors, relating to the understanding of people included: (a) "...county leadership provided the basic understanding of how I [participant] interact with those around me"; (b) "I [participant] hear people talking a lot about personality"; and (c) "...county leadership gave us [participants] the techniques and knowledge to deal with different styles and personalities all with the purpose of working with each other instead of against one another." Risk taking was mentioned by one director as another personal benefit from the leadership program. Several participants have shown growth and have done things that they might not have tried without having participated in the program. Several participants broadened and changed their perspectives and views as perceived by three of the directors. Statements, communicated by program directors, that characterized a participant's broadened perspective included: (a) "looking through different glasses or a different perspective on things was helpful"; (b) "when you get positive people together, you can look for the positive instead of the negative"; and (c) "we have a small village mayor who said it [leadership program] really helped her appreciate the big picture much more so." Another personal benefit for participants, as identified by four of the directors, was the change in leadership roles in the community. This was particularly true for some professionals new to the community who became very active in community affairs after participating in the leadership program. In addition, some participants who had extensive volunteer experience before the leadership program were running for public positions.

Three of the directors stated that an increased understanding of leadership was a positive outcome of the leadership program. Some examples of participants' comments, communicated by program directors, that illustrated understanding the role of leadership included: (a) "the leadership program gave me [participant] the opportunity to improve my leadership skills both at work and at home" and (b) "the leadership program was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the county, myself [participant], and how to enhance leadership skills." Motivation was addressed by two directors as a positive result of the leadership program. Some program directors quotes that illustrated motivation included: (a) "an effective leader can motivate and energize the community"; (b) "the people who have attended the program have increased their interest and enthusiasm for their jobs"; and (c) "I think it [leadership program] has been a moral booster and also increased specific skills." Accepting responsibility was expressed by one director as a personal benefit for participants of the leadership program; the word leadership made people more cognizant of responsibility. Two directors stated that personal problem solving skills were gained by program participants. Some examples of the participants' comments included: (a) "I think that we've improved people's or given them skills and they've been able to take [the skills] back [and use them] immediately" and (b) "when I [participant] got the information I didn't really need it or didn't see a place for it, but now I see how it can all fit in."

Community Benefits

Program directors felt the leadership program benefitted their community in several ways. According to the directors, one of the greatest benefits to the community was the increased sense

of teamwork the programs created from the planning stage to the program's completion. One director commented that "by making the community available...to visit and see and have insight into what makes a community work" the participants see that "cooperativeness and collaboration are necessary to make a community run smoothly." Another director, discussing how the program fostered team development, said the participants learned "that we can work better as we work together." One director felt the "networking opportunity...bringing individuals together from different walks of life" was an important aspect of the program. Other directors concurred; one said "the participants now feel comfortable calling somebody and saying 'will you help me on this or that?'." A "brotherhood of sorts" is how one director classified the participants; "It's been fascinating to watch some of the relationships that have developed."

Another community benefit the directors described was the development of local leaders. One director applauded the variety of local leadership participating in the county program by stating that "the leaders themselves are some of the people who need to develop these leadership skills." After participating in the program, people felt "much more qualified themselves to go out and be a part of the leadership." One program developed a youth leadership program, which worked by "helping youth understand some leadership responsibilities, connecting them with community leaders, hearing their ideas and working...to understand and solve some issues."

The leadership programs helped their communities through the implementation of local projects. Some projects undertaken by program participants included a grandstand construction project, a county strategic plan, and a youth leadership project.

The success of leadership programs and projects helped to spread the word of the programs throughout the communities. Several directors indicated a large amount of interest in the programs grew from radio and newspaper coverage. Past participants recommended the experience to friends and coworkers; industry professionals and government officials reserved spaces for participants from their departments. One professional asked a director "how many places he could buy for members of his company." Other counties have also shown interest in the programs, seeing potential in their own community.

A final benefit expressed by the directors was the focus the programs put on the local community. One director stated, "we have to take it upon ourselves to look at the issues and make things better." Another said, "now we're looking for some resources in the community to teach and facilitate." Still another director said the community now has some ideas "to help us find the answers for community problems."

Benefits Attributed to OSU Extension and Project EXCEL

Program directors felt OSU Extension's Project EXCEL played an essential role in the development of a strong leadership program. One director claimed "if it hadn't been for Extension's Project EXCEL, we wouldn't have had a leadership program." OSU Extension provided "guidance in planning...and helping us choose topics." OSU Extension staff members were described as having helped tremendously to put the programs together. Materials, developed by OSU Extension personnel, were described specifically as important to a successful program. OSU Extension also provided many of the speakers and facilitators used by county programs. One director stated "The evaluations of anyone [instructors] who came from

Extension were strong. I think you could stack those programs right up against somebody (charging much more)."

The financial state of local areas was mentioned by several directors as a potential barrier to a successful leadership program. OSU Extension helped to "fill a need in communities that nobody else can fill. It is very difficult to get speakers to come into a county at the very low cost that Project EXCEL does and provide such high quality results." Another director explained, "Ours is a relatively low tuition compared to those programs around the state, and if it were not for the expertise and the speakers available through OSU Extension, I don't think our program would be as successful as it has been." With the cost kept low, explained another director, "it doesn't keep the small business owner from participating and the corporate sponsors can send two or three people."

Program directors and OSU Extension agents who served as program directors described several professional benefits from their roles. Several described the increase in community networking as beneficial. One agent explained, "It was a good opportunity for me to meet and become acquainted with people I need to know." Another agent saw new areas for Extension programming as a result of what was learned in the class.

Program Improvement

Additional program topics suggested by the directors did not seem to have any themes or consistency across leadership programs. They seemed to reflect program topics that were unique to each community's needs. Among the topics suggested for future programs were: grantsmanship, economic development, customer relations, reinventing government,

boardsmanship, personality types, and public speaking. Economic development was suggested as a topic by two program directors, whereas volunteerism was not among the topics that the program directors felt the participants used. The program directors also suggested that the leadership programs needed to move from topics of developing awareness to those involving more active leadership.

Two conflicting themes related to the length of programs appeared to emerge from the interviews with the program directors. On the one hand, they suggested that more time was needed to develop the ideas and presented more in-depth. However, an apparent conflicting theme was the need to have shorter sessions in the afternoon.

All but one program directors indicated that, as far as format went, it was not a good idea to operate the programs over the summer months. The one program director felt it was better to run the program continuously for 11 months taking a break at Thanksgiving and Christmas when one class has graduated and another not yet begun. The program directors also indicated a need to bring in experts to work with and involve the participants in the sessions. One program director indicated that having a bibliography and potential next steps related to the topics presented would be helpful. Another theme was that attendance and participation expectations should be made clear to the participants at the start of the program.

In the area of recruitment, the program directors indicated that having local businesses and agencies sponsor participants in the leadership programs would be helpful. Additionally, participants should be encouraged to provide feedback to the sponsors in order to maintain their interest in helping with future class members.

Several program directors indicated a concern related to the funding of future programs. They were concerned about obtaining low cost local programs and reducing the administrative costs related to presenting the program.

To improve future programs, there was a general concern related to keeping previous program participants involved and active with future programs. Ways suggested for involving the alumni included presenting programs and conducting fund raising activities.

Alumni Perspectives

Focus group interviews were conducted with community leadership program alumni. Presented in this section are the alumni perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts on the personal benefits they received as a result of participating in the leadership programs, benefits to the community, benefits attributed to OSU Extension and Project EXCEL and improvements needed in the leadership programs.

Personal Benefits

Alumni felt the leadership program improved their ability to communicate effectively. A few alumni indicated that the leadership program had helped them to listen better, not only at the work place, but also at their homes. As a result of the leadership program, one alumnus had started weekly meetings with employees to discuss current issues and concerns. Other examples of how alumni characterized their improved communication included: better interaction among program participants, better understanding of issues in the community, stating opinions and positions without being offensive, better balance between listening and speaking, coming to the middle ground on terms, and providing better instructions and directions to employees.

Many alumni felt the leadership program was an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with people in the community who are in leadership positions. Some alumni indicated that they became aware of the various existing organizations in the county. Other personal networking examples included: good relationships among program participants, change in participants' interaction throughout the leadership program, being on a first name basis toward the end of program, and participants feeling more comfortable with everyone in the group. As a result of this initial interaction, people wwere be able to call upon each other with a level of familiarity; this was the start of community networking.

Community awareness was another program outcome identified by the alumni. The leadership program provided a variety of illustrations on how people in the county operate; alumni learned how government officials interact and work together. In addition, people enrolled in the program learned about business, education, service organizations, government structure, and resources available in the community. Some alumni stated that they gained a broader perspective of the issues of the community. "A program like this gives you a level of appreciation for the community as a whole" was stated by one participant.

Some alumni felt their self-confidence increased as a result of the leadership program. The level of understanding about community issues gained through the leadership program helped most of the alumni to build their self confidence. In addition, some exercises built into the leadership program, such as public speaking, aided alumni in feeling more comfortable with themselves when speaking to larger audiences. Some alumni felt more at ease when asked for their opinions. Examples of comments related to opportunities for building self confidence

included: "very rewarding," "very confidence building," "feel better about myself," "more self-confident," and "more secure."

Understanding others was another outcome recognized by people participating in the leadership program. As a result of the program, alumni were more sensitive to other people's feelings, personality styles, and leadership styles. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator exercise was perceived to be an effective tool for learning how to communicate and work with other people. Alumni felt they had a larger comfort level with different personality styles; they had a wider scope for viewing issues and understanding how personality styles affect people in their decision making process. The leadership program provided opportunities for alumni to get to know each other, not only in a work environment setting, but also at social settings. Alumni also expressed what they learned about conflict management; they were able to confront problems and different types of personalities keeping in mind the win-to-win approach.

Several alumni indicated the program helped them to take risks. The public speaking exercise was considered by many alumni as very challenging. Video taping the speeches made this experience more stressful for some participants. Another event considered to be very demanding was the Challenge by Choice high ropes course exercise, particularly since individuals were uncomfortable revealing their perceived weaknesses to others.

Having a broadened and/or changed perspective on many issues was an outcome identified by several alumni. The leadership programs helped alumni open their eyes to different ideas. The session on paradigms was very interesting and educational to several individuals. Alumni were more aware and sensitive about people's differences and perspectives; there were

different ways to examine and look at issues. Alumni were more aware of why reaching a consensus is so difficult, especially when there are several points of view to consider.

Several alumni felt the program improved teamwork. The different exercises built into the leadership program promoted team building, cooperation, trust, comradery, and bonding. Alumni valued the exercise of getting people involved in the decision making process. One alumnus stated "bringing people along does not necessarily mean getting everybody in agreement, but to a consensus that they are able to live with."

As a result of participating in the leadership program, alumni had a better understanding of leadership in the following themes: definition of leadership, leadership theories (e.g., situational leadership), leadership styles, personality styles, paradigms, conflict management, qualities of a leader, and roles of a leader. One alumnus stated "the leadership program helped me to understand better the way I lead; helped me to look at other people's perspectives; be open-minded to a broad spectrum of what's going on; and being comfortable when soliciting other people's opinions."

The leadership program increased the alumni motivation to get more involved in community efforts. The confidence of these individuals grew throughout the leadership program. One alumnus expressed that he had a renewed interest in the community and the people around him had noticed that as well. Another alumnus mentioned that he was interested in working for a better community, particularly since he wanted his children to grow up in a good community.

The leadership program helped some individuals to define their interests in the community. One alumnus stated that the program aided him to move from a follower to a leader

position in the community and feel comfortable about the change. Another alumnus mentioned that the program helped her learn the main roles of a leader and the strategies for running for public positions.

A few alumni comments indicated an increased ability to solve problems. Some alumni were thankful for the many opportunities they had during the leadership program to identify problems and work as a group to solve these problems. One alumnus stated "I think it [the leadership program] made a tremendous difference in my ability to deal with employees and try to look at their perspective."

Alumni described changes in their approaches to community problem solving as a result of the leadership programs. One alumnus said, "I see a lot of problems but I also see a lot of solutions...things that I perceive to be problems maybe aren't....Probably the best way to overcome a problem is to be a little better educated about it." An alumnus who was also a school board member thought that "if all of us had this kind of background, we could probably work through a lot of problems better than we do."

One alumnus stated "the program helped broaden my view of what's going around in this community. I see a lot of public decisions being made with inaccurate information or misconceptions due to not seeing a broader picture." Another alumnus voiced a similar sentiment, stating, "Public officials...filter information through their own paradigms and personalities...in every walk of life there is a need for improvement in the way you deal with people and the way we make our decisions."

Community Benefits

The building of community networks was another benefit described by leadership program alumni. One alumnus explained, "Groups are pulling together to start to work for a common goal and a common direction, and I think that's just the tip of the iceberg. We learned to pull resources from all over the county and work as a county rather than everybody doing their own little thing." Another alumnus gained insight about how government officials and agencies interrelate. "The networking from private to public individuals was just fantastic" claimed another. "This class pulled everybody together," added a participant who described his county as fragmented. "Things are happening across county lines...more connections are being made," voiced another.

Benefits Attributed to OSU Extension and Project EXCEL

Alumni did not identify any benefits for OSU Extension and/or Project EXCEL. This may be because program directors are the individuals who have the most contact with OSU Extension personnel in setting up the leadership programs and the participants do not realize or forget the instructors' organization.

Program Improvement

In the discussion of topics by alumni in the focus groups, there tended to be agreement that more time needed to be spent for the individuals to see the relevance and apply what they had learned. Too many sessions focused on the presentation of information and not enough time was spent discussing and seeing how the topic could be applied in different leadership settings within the individual's community.

Several alumni voiced the need for class projects to practice skills learned in the leadership workshops. One alumnus commented, "we have all these skills, now what are we going to do with them?" Another added, "I think we need to pull back together and really see what we did learn or what we can do with it." One alumnus suggested a project which would take place throughout the class, "on a session by session basis, to apply what you are picking up...and how you could use it." The information and skills learned in the class session "are all important pieces," claimed an alumnus, "but you need something to tie them together. [A project] might be one way to do it." Another alumnus suggested undertaking the project of "park improvement in a particular area and try to get people in the area to come in and be part of the group...to see how groups and committees work."

One alumnus disagreed with the idea of having one group project because, "the group is too diverse to hold everybody's interest on one project." Another alumnus suggested breaking the class into smaller groups that would then tackle projects.

Another suggestion for improving the leadership programs was to have an agreed upon agenda and that the outcomes for the sessions be known to all. One alumnus suggested that managing change would be a topic to consider adding to the program. Two topics identified for addition to the program were: (a) how to organize within a community; and (b) how to increase an individual's understanding of their own community.

The major changes recommended for the format of the leadership program related to reducing the amount of content, allowing individuals more time to discuss and reflect, and providing more time to apply what had been learned. For example, one alumnus indicated "...we

were just getting to the meat of it, ...at that point when we had to break up." Another alumnus stated, "...gee, I'd like to be able to talk about what I learned today with the people that I'm with but I'm not going to see them probably again until next month." Yet another alumnus said, "...we can use the information that we've been given, and...kind of experiment with each other...trying to identify types...and things...or resolve problems."

Comments related to program evaluation centered on the awareness of the program, an overall purpose of the program, size of the program and the qualification of assessors. One alumnus stated, "People across the county need to know that this program exists, that we have a program and we have people that are so-called alumni of the program and we can't just...hide it in a closet." Several alumni focus groups suggested that more time needed to be spent on "leadership" rather than visiting the community, assessing leaders, and community awareness. There seemed to be a consensus that the class size should be between 20 and 25.

Many alumni indicated that they would like to see some type of continuation of the program. This continued involvement could be helping present future programs or by participating in an advanced type of program.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This descriptive exploratory study as to assess what impact community leadership development programs have on program participants' leadership skills. Following is a summary of the characteristics of the population, personal benefits gained by participants, comparison

group results, participants' organizations/activities involvement, benefits attributed to OSU Extension and Project EXCEL, and suggestions for program improvement.

Characteristics of the Population

The participants were an average of 38 years in age and had lived in the community an average of 21 years. Slightly more than three-fourths of the participants held professional or managerial positions with nearly all being employed full-time. Nearly two-thirds of the participants were college graduates with four out of five participants making at least $30,000 per year. The majority of the participants were White with one-third either living in a rural setting or in a small city. Nearly two-thirds of the participants were male; two out of three had communicated with a public official within the last year with the most communication occurring with local public officials. Participants received an average of 16 hours of leadership training during the last year.

Personal Benefits

The significant differences in responses on the pre- and post assessments indicated that the community leadership program participants increased their leadership skills in the areas of Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way and Encouraging the Heart. The participants' significantly higher score for the practice of Challenging the Process on the post test was supported by the alumni who stated they were more willing to take risks as a result of participating in the community leadership programs. Several alumni also indicated they were going to run for a public office or a public position after completing the program. These results were supported by Rohs and Langone (1993) and

Langone and Rohs (1992) findings that participants in the Georgia community leadership program reported taking on more leadership roles and being more motivated to become involved in local and state affairs as a result of participating in the program.

Inspiring a Shared Vision's significantly higher post test score for the participants was reinforced by the alumni comments of: being motivated to become active within the community or increasing their involvement in community efforts; developing a broader point of view; and becoming more aware of the community as a whole after graduating from the community leadership program. Similar findings were reported by Kimball et al. (1987) for participants in the Michigan Expanding Horizons program and in the Montana leadership training program (Williams, 1981). These participants reported that they anticipated a greater involvement in community organizations as well as becoming more active as leaders in local community affairs. Kincaid & Knop (1992) also found that participants had an increased sense of community pride and commitment as well as increased citizen awareness. Participants in the study by Langone and Rohs (1992) reported reactivating some of their non-functioning community groups after completing the leadership program.

The significantly higher participant score on the post test for the practice of Enabling Others to Act was strengthened by the alumni focus group comments. Alumni indicated that as a result of the community leadership program, they were better able to develop teamwork strategies, foster collaboration, apply problem solving skills, and develop greater networks within their daily lives and within their volunteer organizations and communities. Similar findings were reported by the Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee (1991) that

participants developed greater networks within the community and were exposed to more issues as a result of participating in a leadership program. Langone and Rohs (1992) also reported participants developed greater networks because of the leadership program.

The participant's significantly higher score on the post test for Modeling the Way was bolstered by the alumni comments that they were better able to understand and interact with others in their personal and professional lives. Alumni indicated an understanding of how leadership roles change in different contexts and how to adapt their leadership style to fit the situation. Increased communication skills were also developed as a result of participating in the community leadership programs.

For the final practice of Encouraging the Heart, participants also had a significantly higher score on the post test. Again, alumni enhanced this finding by stating they had increased their self-confidence through experiential activities such as public speaking and the Challenge by Choice high ropes course exercise. Kimball et al. (1987) found similar results with Michigan's Expanding Horizons leadership program. Participants in the Michigan program reported developing a greater understanding of personal leadership styles and organizational effectiveness. Feelings of self-worth, increased self-confidence, and greater confidence in their personal leadership abilities were similar findings reported by Williams (1981) with the Montana leadership program.

Comparison Group Results

No significant differences were found between the participants' and the comparison group's pretest mean scores on four of the five leadership practices of Challenging the Process,

Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart. The comparison group scored themselves significantly higher on the practice of Modeling the Way. No significant differences were found between the participants' and the comparison group's post test mean scores on the five leadership practices. However, the participants had higher mean scores on the post test for each of the five leadership practices. Several factors could have contributed to no significant differences being found between the participants and the comparison group: (a) the comparison group was too small statistically to test for any significant differences; (b) the Leadership Practices Inventory may not have been the most useful tool to use as a pre- and post test questionnaire; and (c) the comparison group may have participated in other leadership development type activities throughout the year that affected their post test scores.

Organizations/Activities Involvement

Comparisons were made on the pre- and post test questionnaire relating to the participants' organizations/activities involvement during the leadership program year. Participants significantly increased their involvement with organizations/activities. This corresponded to the significant increase in the number of hours they spent in organizations/activities per month. The number of offices held and the number of memberships on committees did not significantly increase during the year; however, both showed a slight increase from the pretest data to the post test data for this study. Similar findings were reported by Kimball et al. (1987) where participants increased their involvement from 2.6 organizations to 2.8 organizations over an 18 month period.

Benefits Attributed to OSU Extension and Project EXCEL

Program directors indicated that their programs benefitted from OSU Extension's and Project EXCEL's quality resources (i.e., instructors and curriculum materials). The low cost for these services was also greatly appreciated due to the tight budget constraints and the need for low administrative costs for the community leadership programs. Langone and Rohs (1992) reported that Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service experienced increased visibility, new sources of support and staff members were asked to serve in a leadership capacity for a greater variety of organizations.

Program Improvement

Program directors and alumni suggested their programs could be strengthened by allowing more time for in depth discussion of the program day's topic and allowing time for personal reflection. Alumni made the suggestion of reducing the amount of content covered during the program day to allow this discussion and reflection to occur. Program directors agreed; however, program participants wanted the length of the program day shortened which created an apparent conflict. Williams (1981) reported that a more intensive program was superior to the one week type program; however, no studies reported any findings related to length of program day.

Alumni recommended more hands-on practical learning experiences. They proposed the entire class have a project to complete as a group that would have allowed them to apply the skills they were learning throughout the program. Alumni also would have liked additional planned learning experiences beyond their program year in the form of an advanced program or

other programming avenues. Kincaid and Knop (1992) reported that follow-through needed to be improved and project time increased for class projects. However, the Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee (1991) found that participants felt the team projects were too time consuming and had few tangible results. Whent and Leising (1992) recommended more active participation of the class members in all segments of the program.

Recruitment was a concern to both program directors and alumni. Program directors indicated they would have liked local businesses and agencies to sponsor participants in the leadership program but that the participants should also provide feedback to these sponsors. Alumni suggested that a longer lead time was needed for recruitment and a general awareness of the programs was needed throughout the county. Although this study did not find any results related to gender and race, Whent and Leising (1992) recommended increasing the number of women and minorities for their program. The Leadership Tomorrow Evaluation Committee (1991) reported that community leaders and alumni suggested that the target audience be senior level corporate leaders and public leaders in order for more community change to occur.

Conclusions

The difference in responses on the pre- and post assessments indicated that the participants did improve their leadership skills and practices as a result of participating in their respective community leadership programs. The participants indicated they: (a) were more willing to challenge the status quo and take risks; (b) had broadened and changed their perspective of leadership roles/responsibilities within the community and were encouraging others to accept some leadership responsibility; (c) had developed a greater appreciation for

teamwork and collaboration within their community and had improved their problem solving skills; and (d) had learned to adapt their leadership styles to fit different contexts within the community.

The focus group and face-to-face interviews enriched the results of the total study. Perceptual insights were gained on how community leadership programs contributed to the participants' personal and professional lives and to the community. Alumni were highly complimentary of their respective leadership programs. The most common benefits reported by the alumni were: (a) increased networking within the community; (b) developed a greater understanding and ability to interact with people; (c) increased self-confidence and the personal motivation to become actively involved in community affairs; and (d) developing an understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of their leadership responsibility as a citizen. Additionally, participants also increased their participation in the number of community organizations/activities and increased their number of hours spent volunteering within each of these organizations.

Program directors and alumni identified several recommendations to improve the quality of the leadership programs. Programmatically, suggestions were to: (a) include additional topics such as grantsmanship, customer relations, boardsmanship, economic development, reinventing government and public speaking; (b) allow the class participants to develop their program agendas and goals in collaboration with program directors to make the program more learner centered; (c) reduce the amount of content per program day to allow the participants more time for discussion, reflection, and to see the relevance of the concepts being taught; (d) develop

workshops, seminars, discussion groups, and other means of making leadership development a life long learning process; and (e) continue to promote the community leadership program within the community and secure additional funds from corporate and local sponsors.

Recommendations

The review of literature and the findings of this study led the investigators to several recommendations for future programming in community leadership programs:

1. Community leadership programs should incorporate curriculum application of leadership skills in addition to leadership awareness. Allocating more time for hands-on practical learning experiences would tremendously enhance community leadership programs. As suggested by alumni, assigning a class group project would help to apply the leadership skills learned throughout the program.
2. Additional educational programming, such as optional educational workshops and seminars, needs to be conducted for alumni of the community leadership programs. Advanced educational programming should be made available for those alumni wanting to pursue more in depth study of leadership. A needs assessment should be conducted with alumni of the community leadership programs to determine what topics should be addressed in these additional workshops.
3. More in depth study for the development of an individual's leadership behaviors and actions should be incorporated into the programs and less time spent on community awareness. Community leadership programs should be designed in two-phases. The first phase should be designed for the development of the participant's leadership behaviors

and actions and to learn about community issues while the second phase should incorporate the application of the behaviors and actions through a class project.

4. Annual educational workshops should be provided for program directors on adult education training techniques. Such workshops would allow program directors to enhance their teaching skills and develop additional capacities for future programming efforts.

Need for Further Study

1. The development of a quantitative research instrument is recommended for future programming in community leadership programs. The Leadership Practices Inventory did not show a significant increase in leadership behavior changes for program participants than for those individuals who did not participate.
2. A more standardized curricula should be in place when comparing community leadership programs. Qualitative and quantitative findings might be affected by differences in the curriculum.
3. The number of participants in the control group should be large enough to make meaningful and statistical comparisons with the treatment group. In addition, extraneous variables (i.e, previous knowledge and experience in leadership or participation in other leadership seminars and workshops) affecting the results need to be identified and controlled.

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Appendix A

Table 9: Summary Description of Community Leadership Programs

County	Year Established	Class Size	Tuition Charged	Participant Program Year Begin	Participant Program Year End	Frequency of Class	Time of Class	Retreat Held	Alumni Association
Auglaize	1993	10	$140.00	March '93	September '93	Monthly	8:30 am - 4 pm	None	No
Clinton	1986	21	$500.00	January '94	November '94	Monthly	7:30 am - 5:30 pm	Opening	Yes
Fayette	1993	11	$350.00	September '93	June '94	Monthly	7:30 am - 5 pm	Opening	No
Hardin	1993	19	$150.00	March '94	November '94	Monthly	1 - 5 pm	None	No
Licking	1987	40	None	January '94	December '94	6 times/yr	8:30 am - Noon	None	No
Paulding	1993	20	$100.00	January '93	June '93	Monthly	Varies	None	No
Williams	1990	15	$450.00	September '93	May '94	Monthly	8 am - 4 pm	Opening	Yes

Appendix B

Program Director Interview Questions

Brief description of project/impact study.

Introduction to interview process, including tape recorder, confidentiality, etc.

- To start off, please give a brief history of your leadership program?
  - Date started
  - How the program came into existence
  - How the program is governed

- What role has Extension and Project EXCEL played in your leadership program during the last year?
  - What type of support did you expect? Were these expectations met?
  - What has been the percentage of time of Extension/EXCEL involvement?

- How have the class participants changed as a result of participating in your leadership program?

- How has your community changed as a result of the leadership program?
  - What issues have been learned about?

- What are the major strengths of your leadership programs? What are some areas that might need improvement?

- Is there any additional information you would like to add to your OACL Leadership Resource Directory survey? We will be using this information to assist us in describing your leadership programs since we have already collected a majority of information about your program with this survey. (We hope this will be a time saving process for you.)

- Is there anything else you would like to say about your leadership program, its participants or activities?

Thank you for being a part of this interview for the leadership impact study.

Appendix C

Alumni Focus Group Questions

Brief description of project/impact study.

Introduction of focus group process, including tape recorder, confidentiality, etc.

- For the first question, we'll go around the room round-robin style. After that, feel free to respond to the questions in any order. To start off, could you tell me your name and how you first learned about (name of leadership group)?

- Think back over the last year with (name of group); was there one activity or experience that stands out in your mind? Something you found challenging, exciting, difficult....
  - Why was that experience special?
  - What did you learn from that experience?
  - How did the group grow or change from that experience?

- How has your work or family life changed as a result of being involved in (name of group)?
  - Do you approach problems differently? How so?
  - What changes have you noticed in your work or family relationships?
  - What changes have others noticed in you?

- How has your view of the community changed over the past year?
  - What issues have you learned about?
  - Do you see more problems in the community? More solutions?

- How has your view of leadership changed?
  - What is an effective leader?
  - Where do you see the need for leadership in your community?
  - How has your leadership style changed this year?

- How do you plan to use what you've learned from the program?
  - Are you involved in new committees? Issues? Alumni Association?

- Is there anything else you'd like to say about the leadership program, its staff or activities?

Thank you for being a part of this focus group.

Appendix D

Variables Identified for Focus Group and Face-to-face Interviews

Personal Benefits
Improved Communication
Personal Benefits of Networking
Community Awareness
Self-confidence
Understanding Others (MBTI)
Risk Taking
Broadened/Changed Perspective (Paradigms)
Personal Benefits of Team Work/Team Building
Reduced Stress
Change in Leadership Role
Understanding Leadership (Role/Definition)
Motivation
Accepting Responsibility
Personal Benefits of Problem Solving Skills
Citizenship
Long Range Planning/Strategic Planning

Community Benefits
Community Benefits of Team Work/Team Building
Customer Satisfaction
Community Benefits of Projects/Community Development
Community Benefits of Networking
Increased Awareness of Leadership Program
Developing New Leaders
Increased Volunteerism
Assuming Community Responsibility/Challenges Status Quo
Community Benefits of Problem Solving Skills

Description of Program
Topics
Length
Structure/Format
Recruitment/Marketing
Selection Criteria
Funding
Program Management
Type of Participants
Program Evaluation

Program Improvement
Program Improvement of Topics
Program Improvement of Length
Program Improvement of Structure/Format
Program Improvement of Recruitment/Marketing
Program Improvement of Selection Criteria
Program Improvement of Funding
Program Improvement of Program Management
Program Improvement of Type of Participants
Program Improvement of Program Evaluation
Keeping Alumni Active (Alumni Involvement)
Retention of Alumni
Retention of Participants
Applying/Using New Skills

OSU Extension/Project EXCEL
Role/Involvement/Expectations
Benefits to Extension
Benefits to Extension Agents
Benefits to Directors